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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 QUEBEC 000190

SIPDIS

WHA/CAN FOR TERRY BREESE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER PQ HEAD LANDRY SUMS UP HIS SUCCESSOR

CLASSIFIED BY: Abigail Friedman, Consul General, Quebec City, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (c) Summary: In a Nov. 16 breakfast with CG, former PQ leader and Quebec Premier Bernard Landry expressed support for newly elected PQ leader Andre Boisclair. He characterized the controversy of Boisclair's past cocaine use as "over and done with," but warned that if any new revelation of criminal wrongdoing surfaces, Boisclair's political career will be over. Landry suggested Boisclair's commitment to sovereignty is not deeply felt, but merely a condition that Boisclair must accept in order to run the party. Boisclair will follow the policy course set out by the PQ in its platform ratified last spring. On views of the U.S., Landry felt that Boisclair shares Quebecers' fondness for Americans but objects to a range of current U.S. policies, including Iraq. End summary.

2. (SBU) Former Premier Bernard Landry shared his assessment of the newly-elected Boisclair at the CG's residence the morning after the announcement of PQ election results. (Comment: Since his resignation as head of the PQ last June, Landry has positioned himself as the elder statesman of the PQ and behind-the-scenes mentor to Boisclair. Quebec rumors are that, should Boisclair be undone by his cocaine past or other political difficulties, Landry would likely be called back to restore order in the party. End comment.) French CG Alabrune and TDY Econ/Pol officer Anne Coleman also attended the breakfast.

Consolidating His Hold on the Party

3. (SBU) Landry believes Boisclair's first task is to mend fences within the party after the bitter leadership race. Boisclair's task of unifying the party is made easier by the election timetable, as a provincial election is likely within the next two years. With that election on the horizon, Landry believes PQ members will not have the luxury of extensive internecine warfare. Boisclair's call for party unity will be persuasive, but he will have a tougher time winning over the wider Quebec public, suggested Landry. Boisclair is declining the opportunity (offered by his PLQ opponents) to run uncontested for a seat in the National Assembly so that he has the freedom to travel the province and weigh in on issues at a time and place of his own choosing. To shore up his image, Landry said Boisclair will need to stick close to popular Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe. Boisclair needs to move public concern away from his past wrongdoings, and onto the future of the PQ itself and Quebec more generally. Landry characterized the controversy over Boisclair's past use of cocaine as "over and done with." But he was categorical that if any single new revelation of criminal wrongdoing surfaces, Boisclair's political career will be over. Landry affirmed his confidence in Boisclair, pointing out that although many rumors are circulating, no proof of other wrongdoing has been found.

Boisclair's Thin Sovereigntist Credentials

4. (C) Landry pointed out that Boisclair will not be making new PQ policy, as he must carry out the policies ratified by PQ members during last spring's party congress. On the question of sovereignty, Boisclair stuck close to the PQ platform stating that he will seek a referendum "as soon as possible" after a PQ provincial election victory. Asked by Pol/Econ officer how deep Boisclair's commitment to sovereignty runs, Landry smiled, paused, and responded, "He knows that if he wants to be the head of the Parti Quebecois, he has to support sovereignty."

PQ Election Prospects Uncertain Under Boisclair

5. (SBU) According to Landry, with the advent of Boisclair, the "revolutionary" period of the PQ is over. But Boisclair will need the support of that "revolutionary" generation (including people like Landry) to bring Quebec to independence. Landry speculated that it is not just the cocaine issue that will be problematic for Boisclair but that Boisclair's open

homosexuality will make it difficult for him to win popularity among Quebec's Latin American and African immigrants. Although Boisclair "does not have the same connections" to Quebec's different immigrant communities, Landry himself would help bring out the immigrant vote during an election campaign.

Boisclair is anti-Iraq war~ but not anti-U.S.

16. (U) During the course of the PQ party leadership debate, Boisclair was asked who his favorite political figure was, to which he answered French PM Dominique de Villepin, because of Villepin's "courageous" stance at the U.N. on the war in Iraq. CG asked Landry what he thought Boisclair intended to show by this answer. Landry said that Boisclair's answer should not be taken as an indication that he is anti-American, but rather that he is anti-Iraq war, as is the majority of Quebec.
Comment: Forging an inter-generational alliance in the PQ

17. (C) The election of the young, sharp and ambitious Boisclair as head of the ageing PQ brings with it a potential for the PQ to re-invent itself as the party with broad appeal among the next generation. Now that Boisclair is at the helm of the PQ, he needs to widen his base. Boisclair's personal life and cocaine past are likely to affect his popularity in rural Quebec and among more traditional immigrant groups. For Boisclair to succeed with these groups, he will need PQ allies. We expect Boisclair will keep a coterie of advisors of the "revolutionary" generation, with Landry figuring large among them.

18. (U) This cable was drafted by TDY Pol/Econ Officer Anne Coleman.
FRIEDMAN